



Working with African American Older Adults: The AAAE Cultural Competency Training

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Introductions

The AAAE Cultural Competency Training: Mental Health in Context

- **Goal of training:** The goal of the AAAE Training in Cultural Competency is to build confidence and competence in the provider's ability to **communicate effectively** with older African American client populations
- **Purpose of AAAE CCT:** to teach mental health service providers and primary care health professionals strategies for incorporating cross-cultural skills and values into their own practice.

The AAAE Cultural Competency Training: Mental Health in Context

- The AAAE CCT teaches the AAAE principles in an interactive style that includes didactic presentations, sensitivity exercises, videos, and group discussions.

The AAAE Cultural Competency Training: Mental Health in Context

- Acknowledge
- Assess
- Advocate
- Engage

The AAAE Cultural Competency Training: Mental Health in Context

- **A**cknowledge: The importance and impact of culture, history, differences, unique experiences, individuality and expertise in one's own life.
- **A**ssess: Clients'/consumers' perspectives, beliefs, attitudes, cultural identity, strengths, assets, needs and previous experiences with mental health providers.
- **A**dvocate: For client/consumer needs, awareness and education, access to quality services, and supportive policies.
- **E**ngage: Clients/consumers using culturally competent methods. Participate in outreach strategies that are culturally relevant.

Why focus on African American older adults?

[Health ▾](#)[Physical/Tech ▾](#)[Environment ▾](#)[Society/Education ▾](#)[Quirky ▾](#)

Science News

from research organizations

Mental health disparities higher for older African American adults

Date: August 12, 2014

Source: Taylor & Francis

Summary: A new, revealing literature review suggests that older African American adults are more likely to be diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and dementia than others. The study reviews the mental health issues among the rapidly growing African American older adult population. Given the existing disparities in mental health treatment and the projected growth of the African American older adult population, a dire need for further research to into assessment and treatment with a focus on cultural context is obvious, authors say.

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ARTICLES

African Americans, Mental Health, and Aging

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A critical examination of the literature suggests that older African Americans are more likely to be diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and dementia. Assessment is complicated by potential differences in symptom presentation or reporting and a lack of assessment instruments validated for use with ethnically diverse older populations. Disparities in treatment are exacerbated for several reasons, including failure to access formal treatment, differences in symptomatology response to treatment, lack of available mental health resources, and stigma. Results indicate an enhanced awareness and training of the cultural context of mental health should be considered in clinical practice and research.

KEYWORDS anxiety, assessment, dementia, depression, treatment

Mental health disparities among African American older adults

- 9% of community-dwelling African American adults over 50 have depression, compared to 6.8% of Whites.
- Subthreshold depression is more common in older African Americans.
- Depression often goes undiagnosed in older African Americans.
- In primary care settings, African American older adults are less likely to have a depression diagnosis than Whites.
- Mental health professionals tend to detect fewer depressive symptoms in African Americans.
- African Americans are less likely to receive effective care and management of their illness than other groups.

Mental health disparities among African American older adults

- African Americans age 50 and older have a lifetime anxiety prevalence rate of 11%, compared to 12.6% for Whites.
- Primary care providers were less likely to detect and report anxiousness in their older African American patients.
- Older African Americans are less likely to be taking medications for their anxiety symptoms.
- Primary care doctors are more likely to judge African Americans' emotional symptoms as less severe, even though anxiety disorders among African Americans tend to have a more chronic trajectory.
- Approximately 10% of African American older adults in urban areas have subsyndromal anxiety.

Module 1

Acknowledge

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Acknowledge defined

- 1. to recognize the existence, truth or fact of.
- 2. to express to realization of.
- 3. to recognize the authority, validity or claims of.

What is “culture?”

Culture

- An integrated pattern of learned core values, beliefs, norms, behaviors and customs that are shared and transmitted by a specific group of people.
- Some aspects of culture, such as food, clothing, modes of production and behaviors, are visible.
- Major aspects of culture, such as values, gender role definitions, health beliefs and worldview, are not visible.

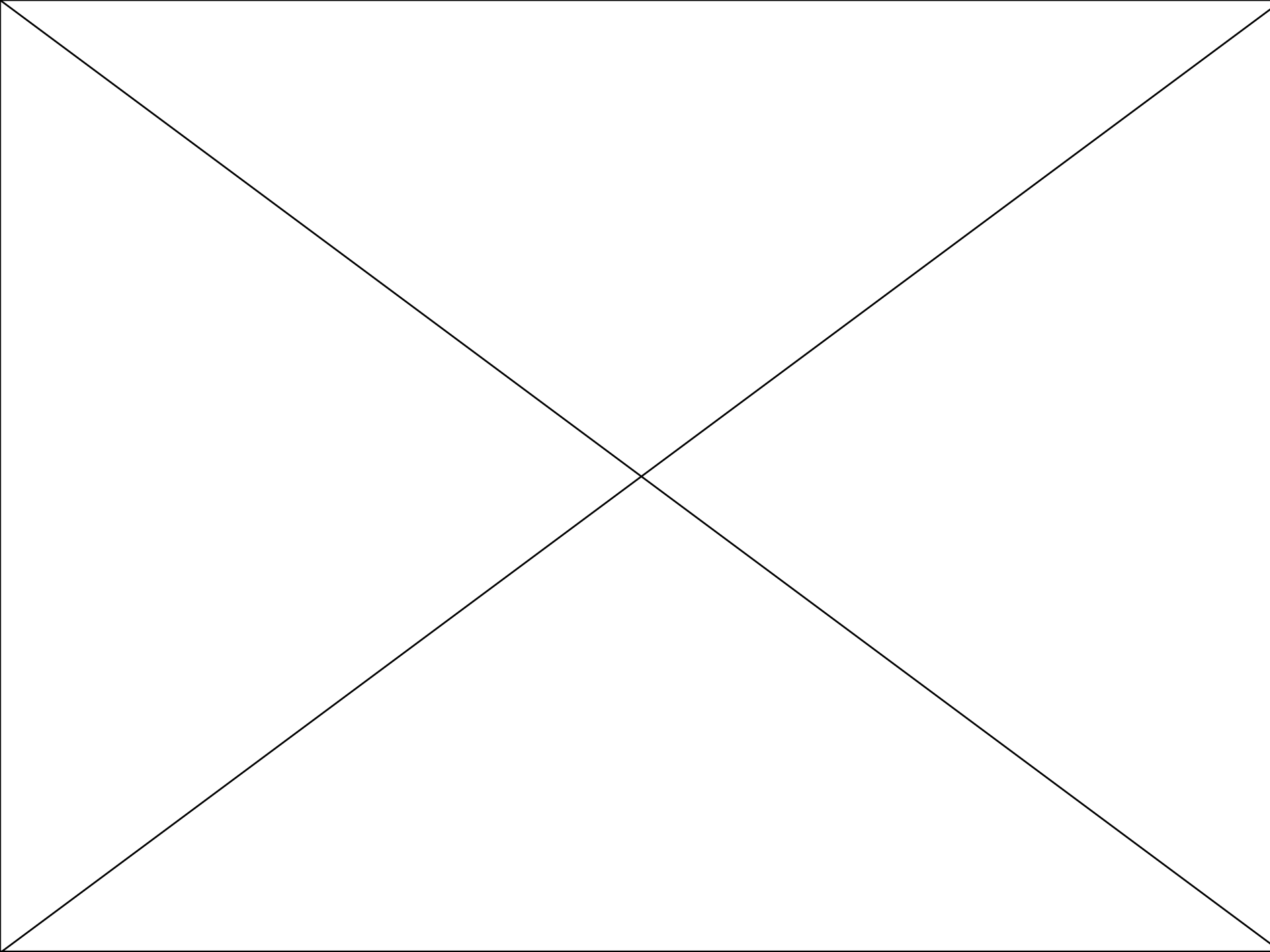
- *The California Endowment*

*What do you know about
African American culture?*

Key Components of African American Cultural Orientation (W. Nobles, 1981)		
CULTURAL LAWS	CULTURAL VIRTUES	CULTURAL PREREQUISITES
Consubstantiation	Ma’at	Sense of family
Interdependence	Truth	Sense of History
Egalitarianism	Justice	Language Orientation
Collectivism	Righteousness	Significance of Names/Naming
Transformation	Harmony	Importance of Signs & Symbols
Cooperation	Balance	Sound (Music) & Rhythm (Dance)
Humanness	Propriety	Dietary Habits
Synergy	Order	
CULTURAL CUSTOMS	CULTURAL VALUES	CULTURAL THEMES
Belief in God (moral character)	Respect for elders	Spirituality
Sanctity of family & children	Self-mastery (thought/behavior)	Resilience
Sense of excellence	Patience	Humanism
Sense of appropriateness	Race pride	Communalism
Importance of history	Collective responsibility	Orality & Verbal
	Restraint	Expressiveness
	Devotion	Personal style & uniqueness
	Cognitive flexibility	Realness
	Persistence	Emotional vitality
	Reciprocity	Musicality/rhythm
	Productivity	
	Resiliency	
	Defiance	
	Integrity	

Why does culture matter?

Culture influences beliefs and attitudes about mental health, diagnosis, help-seeking, and treatment.



African Americans are a heterogeneous group.

Self-Identified Ethnicities by Participants, California Reducing Disparities Project, African American Population Report

African American	Black Latin
African American, Cherokee Indian	Black, French
African American, Cheyenne	Black, Native American (Blackfoot & Cherokee)
African American, Cree	Black, Indian, Portuguese
African American, English (UK)	Black, Irish, Cherokee Indian
African American, Scottish	Black, Indian, White, German
African American, White	Black Sioux, Rosebud Indian Agency
African American, Creole, Irish	Burundian
African American, Egyptian, Indian	Egyptian
African American, Cherokee, Dutch, Irish	Eritrean
African American, Creole, Cherokee Indian	Ethiopian
Afro-Cuban	Ghanaian
Afro-Latino	Nigerian
Black Cuban	Somalian
Black, American Indian	Sudanese
Black, Filipino	Ugandan

Religious Composition of African Americans

	African Americans (%)	Total Population (%)		African Americans (%)	Total Population (%)
Protestant	78	51	Catholic	5	24
Historically Black churches	59	7	Mormon	<.5	2
Baptist	40	4	Orthodox	<.5	1
Methodist	5	1	Jehovah's Witness	1	1
Pentecostal	6	1	Other Christian	<.5	<.5
Holiness	1	<.5	Jewish	<.5	2
Nondenominational	2	<.5	Muslim	1	1
Others	5	1	Buddhist	<.5	1
Evangelical Protestant churches	15	26	Hindu	<.5	<.5
Baptist	5	11	Other World Religions	<.5	<.5
Nondenominational	3	3	Other Faiths	<.5	1
Pentecostal	2	3	Unaffiliated	12	16
Restorationist	2	2	Atheist	<.5	2
Others	2	7	Agnostic	1	2
Mainline Protestant churches	4	18	Don't Know	11	12

Why is religion important?

Religion influences beliefs and attitudes about mental health, diagnosis, help-seeking, and treatment.

Heterogeneity of African American seniors in the AAAE Community Survey

Characteristic	Number	Percent
African American	515	95.5
African	7	1.3
Caribbean	6	2.0
Other ethnicity	11	2.0
Male	160	29.9
Female	375	70.1
45-49 years old*	3	0.6
50-64 years old	162	31.3
65-74 years old	177	34.2
75-84 years old	128	24.8
85 years old and older	47	9.1
Married	83	15.5
Separated	36	6.7
Lived with companion	10	1.9
Widowed	166	31.1
Divorced	165	30.9
Never married	74	13.9
Less than high school diploma	48	8.9
High school diploma	147	27.1
Some college	188	34.7
College degree	159	29.3

*African American older
adults have a unique history*

75 year old, African American client

- 1941 1.2 million African Americans serve in a segregated armed forces during WWII.
- 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* declares that racial segregation in schools is unconstitutional
- 1955 Emmett Till is brutally murdered for allegedly whistling at a white woman in Mississippi.
- 1955 Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat in the "colored section" of a bus to a white passenger.
- 1957 The Little Rock Nine are blocked from entering the school on the orders of the governor.
- 1963 The March on Washington. Martin Luther King delivers his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.
- 1963 Four black girls are killed when a bomb explode at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Riots erupt.
- 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin.

75 year old, African American client

- 1965 Malcolm X is assassinated.
- 1965 Six days of rioting in Watts, 35 people are killed and 883 injured.
- 1966 The Black Panther Party is founded.
- 1967 Major race riots in Newark and Detroit.
- 1967 Thurgood Marshall appointed to the Supreme Court.
- 1967 Supreme Court rules in *Loving v. Virginia* that prohibiting interracial marriage is unconstitutional. Sixteen states still have anti-miscegenation laws.
- 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr., is assassinated.
- 1968 Civil Rights Act of 1968 prohibiting discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing.
- 1972 The Tuskegee Syphilis experiment ends.
- 1983 Race riots in South Central Los Angeles after a jury acquits four white police officers for beating Rodney King.

75 year old, African American client

- 2001 Colin Powell becomes the first African American U.S. Secretary of State.
- 2003 In *Grutter v. Bollinger*, upholds the University of Michigan Law School's policy, ruling that race can be one of many factors considered by colleges when selecting their students.
- 2005 Condoleezza Rice becomes the first Black female U.S. Secretary of State.
- 2006 *Parents v. Seattle* and *Meredith v. Jefferson*, court rules that programs in Seattle and Louisville, Ky., which tried to maintain diversity in schools by considering race when assigning students to schools, are unconstitutional.
- 2008 Barack Obama, becomes the first African American to be elected president of the United States.
- 2009 U.S. Senate confirms Eric H. Holder, Jr. appointed as Attorney General.
- 2014 Michael Brown, unarmed 18-year-old was shot and killed in Ferguson, Mo.
- 2015 The 114th Congress includes 46 black members in the House of Representatives and two in the Senate.

Martin Luther King Jr. would be 86.

Malcolm X would be 90.

Take home points

- Culture influences beliefs and attitudes about mental health and mental illness.
- African American older adults are heterogeneous.
- African American older adults should be understood within an historical context.